WILLIAM PENN

A RADIO ADDRESS

Delivered on his Birthday
October 24, 1934

By
ALBERT COOK MYERS
Chairman of The Historical Committee of The Valley Forge Park Commission and Secretary of The Pennsylvania Historical Commission of The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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WILLIAM PENN: A RADIO ADDRESS

Delivered on his Birthday, Wednesday, October 24, 1934, at 4:07 P. M. (time 7 minutes), Station WCAU, Philadelphia.

By Albert Cook Myers

Presented as the guest speaker by the announcer as follows:

Dr. Albert Cook Myers, noted historian, foremost authority on William Penn, Chairman of The Historical Committee of the Valley Forge Park Commission, Secretary of The Pennsylvania State Historical Commission.

The Address

Today, this twenty-fourth of October, by the Gregorian or New Style calendar, is the 290th birthday of William Penn, the illustrious Founder of Pennsylvania and the foremost Founder of the American Nation. The eminent English historian, Lord Acton, called him "The greatest historic figure of his age," and Tennyson wrote that he was "no comet of a season, but the fixed light of a dark and graceless age shining on into the present."

Under mandate of the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Governor has issued a proclamation calling upon the people for the observance of an event of such deep import; for each one of us, man, woman, and child of whatsoever race or creed, is indebted to William Penn for the privileges and opportunities we enjoy.

Born in the year 1644, under the shadow of the old Tower of London, Penn was the son, by a Dutch mother, of a young English naval captain, later the noted Admiral Sir William Penn, Knight.

As Proprietor and Governor of Pennsylvania, the great Quaker devoted the best part of his life, a period of over thirty years, to the development of his Province, in its formative period, coming here from England on two personal visits of two years each, 1682-1684 and 1699-1701.

During these two sojourns in Pennsylvania, Penn made his country home upon a tract of over 8000 acres, which he called the Manor of Pennsbury, located in the present Falls Township, Bucks County, near Tullytown, beyond Bristol, and some 25 miles up the Delaware River from his capital city of Philadel-

phia. There, while on his first American visit, now two centuries and fifty years ago, he erected, along with various outbuildings, a two-story brick mansion known as Pennsbury House. Here he, and his sons after him, entertained and conferred with the Indians. He wrote that he liked Pennsbury better than any other place in which he had lived.

This structure, which was 62 feet in length, stood on a gentle rise of ground, facing the river, about 70 yards from the shore. The house fell into ruin just before the American Revolution.

In 1932, as part of the Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of Penn's first American arrival, over eight acres of the Pennsbury Manor tract, including the site of Penn's ancient buildings, was donated to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by the Warner Company. A special act of the Legislature placed the property in the control of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission of the State. The Commission acts through a special Pennsbury Committee of three of its members: James N. Rule, Chairman of the Commission and State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Albert Cook Myers, Secretary of the Commission; and Charles Henry Moon, Chairman of the Committee.

A good road to the place has been built recently by the State and national governments, and the property itself has been much improvd.

Under the direction of the Commission's experienced archæologist, Donald A. Cadzow, the work of excavating the Pennsbury site has been in progress for nearly two years, with a most remarkable yield of results. The stone and brick cellar walls of the house have been carefully dug out, and amongst many interesting objects found, and now being classified, are pieces of hardware, such as hinges, locks, keys, nails, and bolts; fragments of leaden casement windows containing bits of glass; seven-inch hearth bricks, five-inch glazed green and yellow tiles of the fireplaces, etc. The foundations of the brew house, other outbuildings and an eighty-foot brick garden wall also have been unearthed.

The Pennsbury Committee, with the coöperation and much-needed private support of a group of the Friends of Pennsbury, headed by a Committee of The Welcome Society, of which Henry Paul Busch is President, proposes to prepare plans, which, while providing effective preservation for the historic ruins uncovered, look to a full, critical, historical reconstruction of William Penn's Colonial Plantation of Pennsbury, the buildings, gardens, orchards, fields, etc.

The necessary information, archæological, historical and architectural, to this end, has been gathered, collated and excerpted. This task has been committed to your present speaker, who not only has examined what has been dug up at Pennsbury, and

inspected certain old buildings of near the same period, but has had recourse to many collections of data, historical and architectural, both here and in England.

The most pertinent historical facts with respect to the problem, however, he has gleaned from his own collection of William Penn materials, which he has been assembling over a long period, preparatory to his proposed issue of the Complete Works of William Penn in fifteen or more large octavo volumes. This collection is the largest on this subject in the world.

Your speaker not only has obtained several views of the brew house, but also has discovered a crude contemporary manuscript drawing, or view, of the front of Pennsbury House, which is of prime importance to the objective; he has also found other particulars, respecting the house, largely in the handwriting of William Penn himself, as to the chimneys, the wainscoting, the brickwork, the heights of the ceilings, and the sizes of the doors, windows, and stairs; he has inventories of the contents of the house by rooms, also of the other buildings, and references to the gardens, courtyards, hedges, gates, fences, steps, paths, orchards, fruits, flowers, livestock, the well, etc. So that it is with considerable confidence that we approach the problems of an authentic reconstruction of the Pennsbury Plantation.

The consummation of our plans would be a worthy and impressive memorial to our great Founder. It should be made possible with the help of as many of our citizens and groups of citizens as possible, but especially should it receive the support of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which owes a great unrequited debt to its Founder.

Your speaker would appreciate information as to papers of William Penn, especially his letters, as well as to data bearing on Pennsbury. Address: Albert Cook Myers, Building of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia.

In conclusion: Notwithstanding the fact that the best authorities of both the Old and the New Worlds accord Penn a foremost rank in our country's history, so far, strange as it may seem, he has failed of election to the Hall of Fame of New York University. Over 100 electors, largely educationalists, representing each of the States, vote every five years. The next election takes place early in 1935. Let each one of us do what we can to remedy this oversight.